

My Scottish
Sketch Book

LIONEL EDWARDS



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JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS

SCARCE
Wishing you the happiest
of Christmases

Yours

Ken Robson

1930.



The River Otis



MY SCOTTISH SKETCH BOOK

by
LIONEL EDWARDS, R.I.

"All weathers are good to those who love the open air."

W. H. HUDSON

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Introduction

BEING one of those fortunate or unfortunate persons who are unable to take any other holiday save that in the nature of a busman's, I have collected, in the course of almost annual visits to Scotland, a considerable amount of material, which for various reasons has not hitherto been put together. These sketches—for they do not aspire to be anything higher—have now been collected, and are served up in the mixed form of a hash. Perhaps, to continue in gastronomical terms, "Scotch Collops" would be a more appropriate title, since with one exception they have not been previously published, and therefore resemble the latter dish in being composed entirely of fresh meat.

As they do not solely depict foxhunting and such kindred subjects as are usually connected with the name of Lionel Edwards, may I, in the words of the immortal John (Jorrocks), ask the reader to apply that moral precept so beautifully inculcated towards his "better 'arf"!

"Be to their faults a little blind
And to their virtues ever kind."

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"Got Him," or The Witching Hour

WE have it on sufficiently eminent, if somewhat disputed, authority that at a certain witching hour "the graveyards yawn and graves give up their dead." We are careless to dispute the fact, and most loath to put it to personal test; but there are other times and seasons on which we would welcome authoritative pronouncement, and perhaps there is no matter on which an angler would so greatly welcome information as that concerning the time when salmon rise! I *have* seen a loch salmon caught, so even they apparently do have "a witching hour"—if only one can happen on it!

The River Ossian

IN spite of an ever-increasing population and the mass production of motor vehicles, there are still a few (not many) spots where one can escape from the sound of motor horns and the fumes of petrol. The sketch, which is reproduced as a frontispiece, depicts one of them.



Grouse over Dogs

NEAR FORT AUGUSTUS

THE sporting artists of former days had, I think, better and easier subjects to depict, so far as shooting is concerned, than those of to-day. Shooting over dogs certainly gave the artist a better chance, and most certainly the grand old costumes of other days were more picturesque than those of to-day. Gainsborough, Stubbs, Marshall, and Wheatley, painted many sportsmen with their dogs, and a very pleasant portraiture it made; but I do not remember seeing any modern "gunners" so depicted. Probably plus fours have frightened off the modern artist! J. N. Sartorius, Wootton, Howitt, Alken, and, last but not least, John Leech, depicted shooting over dogs. But to-day dogs are not extensively used; driving is all the fashion, and until last year I had never seen grouse in this way. This sketch was made on that first occasion. It is said that driving owes its popularity to the lack of "foot-slogging"—a necessity which cannot be avoided when shooting over dogs. Certainly the fact that there is a stronger demand for grouse moors than for deer forests points to the fact that a more luxurious age prefers the less strenuous sports.



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The Shadow

THE history of the sketch is that somewhere I saw a picture of birds—ptarmigan, I think—crouching in the snow beneath the shadow of an eagle's wings. It was called "The Shadow of Death." The memory of this subject remained dormant in my mind until recalled to life near Courtour. I was sitting on a steep hillside. It was a sunny day, but with drifting mist at times. Some red deer, hinds, and calves fed slowly past me on a lower level, quite unaware of my presence. A shadow passing over the sunlit sward caused both myself and the deer to glance up. An eagle sailed over on silent pinions. The hinds and calves bunched together, and all displayed uneasiness at the dreaded presence.

Hence this sketch. Several authentic instances of eagles attacking calves, and even grown deer, are given in J. G. Millais' famous book, "British Deer and their Horns."



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The Twelfth (Icnbnacardoch)

A WET MORNING AS USUAL

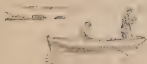
THERE are only two things you can be really sure of during the course of a summer day in the Highlands. One is that you will get wet through (some time), and the other that you will be midge-bitten (most of the time). This sketch was done under both conditions. Let us leave it at that.



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The Other Boat

LIVES there a man, a fisherman, whose heart has never held a jealous thought? I greatly doubt it. I hope I can claim the negative virtue of being not worse than my neighbours, but, if one can gauge the minds of others by one's own, one is bound to admit that the green-eyed monster at times mocks one's best endeavours. Although I cannot claim to be a real fisherman, even I have noticed that usually all the luck goes to "the other boat"!



The Purple Heather

THE grouse is a magician. No other bird could beguile us to embark on a long and tedious railway journey—at the hottest time of the year. Like the proverbial goose, he lays golden eggs, and without his aid few Highland landowners could pay their way in these days of super-taxation. The mere mention of his name works like a charm to set us dreaming of the purple heather that clothes the everlasting hills.



The Midday Rest (Loch Ness)

THIS picture is a fraud, for it suggests a midday rest after a strenuous morning over dogs in pursuit of the elusive grouse bird. In actual fact it depicts a brother artist, plus my host's dogs, on a hot August day above Loch Ness, all in that drowsy state peculiar to after luncheon on the Sabbath!



The Duke of Buccleuch's Hounds

NETHERAW

THE other day I heard two South-Country M.F.H.'s discussing foxhunting in the North, and one of them summed up his views by saying: "Well, I admit it's quite good fun, but somehow the whole atmosphere of Scotland seems wrong for foxhunting." Now, I was about to take up the cudgels on behalf of Northern sport when it occurred to me that to argue on "atmosphere" is rather a tall order. I am well aware that Surtees in *Sponge's "Sporting Tour"* makes Lord Scamperdale say to *Sponge*: "Rot ye, sir! Hangin's too good for yer! Yer should be *condemned to hunt in Berwickshire* the rest of your life!" In actual fact he was singularly unhappy in his choice of Berwickshire, for in those days it was an exceptionally good hunting country; and, indeed, *Nimrod*, in his "Northern Tour," mentions the town of Dunse as the Melton of the North. Of Berwickshire at the present time I have no personal knowledge, but I have hunted in its neighbouring "country," the Duke of Buccleuch's. This is a fine wild country, with few gorses and coverts far apart, almost all grass, and, as it is quite without that huntsman's horror, "a man in every field," foxes make good points. Add the fact that it is also a good scenting country, and it follows that good runs are the rule rather than the exception.

My first sketch depicts the Buccleuch near Netheraw. This was painted on a bright but windy day in November. The coarse, withered hill grass shows particularly white as it is blown about by the breeze.



The Traveller

by J. M. W. Turner



The Hunted Fox

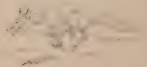
THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH'S

MY second sketch was made on the high ground near Grunstone heights, and depicts a tired fox being overtaken by hounds. In the foreground is a group of Cheviots, that popular breed which seems to be spreading all over the country.



1892

Bucclerini 1



The Linlithgow and Stirlingshire at Cockleroi

ALTHOUGH in the picture this scarcely looks a hunting country, it is, in fact, all grass, and as nice a bit to ride over as can be found within reasonable distance of "Auld Reekie." Artistically it is most attractive, but climatically it was bitterly cold on the day this sketch was made, owing to the wind blowing from the distant snow-capped mountains. In the middle distance is Cockleroi. Behind the latter, down below (unseen), is the old palace of Linlithgow, and beyond it the Forth, the Fife Hills, and in the far distance the Highlands. There was no possibility, I found, of getting Edinburgh Castle for a hunting background, as I had hoped before visiting the country, but the Forth Bridge is to be seen in the distance from some of the Linlithgow and Stirlingshire's best hunting country, and the Forth itself, if, perhaps, not the bridge, with the distant Fife Hills, makes a *mise en scène* hard to beat.



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Over the Park Wall, Dalmahoy

THE LINLITHGOW AND STIRLING

THIS sketch, or, rather, colour note, is the only one included in this book which was not painted from Nature. In all the others the backgrounds, and in many cases the figures, etc., also, were sketched in direct from Nature. This memory note was made after hunting with the Linlithgow and Stirlingshire, and represents hounds climbing the park wall of Dalmahoy (now a golf club), which is one of the nearest points to Edinburgh over which hounds still hunt. Edinburgh as a hunting centre is not what it was, owing to the spread of building and industrialism in general. But the motor has fortunately to some extent counteracted the greater distances now to be covered on a hunting morning, and the Linlithgow and Stirling still have two of the greatest essentials in a hunting district—namely, an excellent huntsman (J. Woodger) and a first-class pack of hounds.

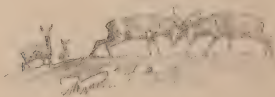


"The last night
 (at home)
 (The last night of the year)"



The Declaration of War

IT is a strange irony that Fate should have decreed that the red deer, an essentially woodland animal, should now only have its habitat in those treeless wastes called deer forests. In those few places where deer can get down on to lower ground and amid the shelter of trees they are undoubtedly better able to withstand the bitter winters of the North. In this sketch they are shown in one of the few wooded glens to which they have access. Twisted pines, torn by winter winds, are not much in the way of shelter, yet here the deer may often be found, and during the month of October their guttural, challenging roars and clash of meeting horns sound peculiarly weird and sinister in the silent woods, especially if heard after sunset.



Any Chance of a Second Shot?

"Hic dies, vere mihi festus, atrox eximit curas."

("This day, for me a true holiday, shall banish gloomy cares.")

A man can only kill his first stag once, and not much more often can he reach that vague, uncharted region known as the Seventh Heaven, to which we are given to understand this event can uplift him. Many writers have described "my first stag," but the second seems strangely omitted! Yet days "amid the High Hills" are infrequent joys to most of us, and he would be a fool indeed who did not try for a second shot, should the fates be propitious and he a privileged guest, with a stalker anxious to show the maximum of sport.



Forest Fairies (Roedeer)

IT is remarkable, but none the less a fact, that these animals, unquestionably the most beautiful of the British deer, are generally almost ignored in natural history books. Moreover, the roe is equally slighted as a sporting animal. As a rule he is shot with "scatter guns," and the method used is driving—not exactly a high form of sport. There are, however, a few experts with the rifle who realise that he is deserving of a better fate. Roedeer, although very shy, are by no means uncommon in England, as well as in Scotland, but many people, not knowing of their existence, either do not believe they exist, or, if they see them, confuse them with fallow deer.

I might add that in suitable woodland country, if sketching by himself in the late evening or early morning, no one is more likely to see them than an artist.



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Highland Foxhunting

THE todhunter, as the North-Country foxhunter used to be called, was usually a professional vermin killer, for the fox is vermin in the Highlands and in parts of North Wales. Legally he is, I believe, vermin everywhere, but the good sportsmanship of the British nation has made it customary to consider his death, except by the legitimate method of pursuit by horse and hound, as "vulpecide" in any district where a pack of hounds exists.

This method of pursuit being impossible among the crags and morasses of the North, his reduction is accomplished in other ways—trap, gun, and poison. But the latter, if, perhaps, the most efficacious, is a weapon with a double edge. I have among my Welsh acquaintances one such professional foxhunter, who endeavours to cope with the mountain foxes by similar methods. One year, in response to the demands of the local farmers (who pay him 10s. a head for adults and 5s. for cubs), he laid poison on an extensive scale. He certainly obtained a lot of foxes, but a good "bag" of sheepdogs also! Now, a good working sheepdog represents in hard cash dozens of foxes, and he cannot be replaced easily, since sheepdogs take a long time to learn their job, and even a well-trained dog, when bought, never works quite as well for a new master as for the man who trained him in the first place. So poison has since that day been taboo, and my acquaintance now works with dogs, gun, and traps only.

Whilst on the subject of poison, I read the other day in a well-known sporting work, advocating the use of poison for vermin, that "foxes, carrion crows, and other destructive animals will eat a dead rat, whereas no dog will do so." Having had two dogs killed by eating poisoned rats whilst destroying those vermin, I know this to be incorrect. My own experience of mountain fox destruction (I cannot dignify it



Highland Foxhunting (continued)

with the name of hunting) was confined to two days, and the method employed on one occasion was for two or three shepherds to "draw" the hillsides with their collies and terriers, whilst the "guns" were stationed in ambush to command the foxes' earths. The foxes, disturbed by the dogs, fled in haste, and were shot as they endeavoured to go to ground.

On the other occasion, which was in the spring, we just wandered about trying likely places, and when the terriers "marked" a fox to ground we tried to bolt him and to shoot him as he emerged. I missed mine, and the "pro." would not accept my excuse that if I had fired I most certainly should have peppered him as well! We spent most of our time digging, and a most dangerous amusement it was, for, not being professional quarrymen, we frequently moved great masses of rock by accident. I might add, my sketch depicts the former method of pursuit.

